

#197: JUNE 11–JULY 10, 2014 A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

# THE INDYPENDENT

FIGHTING FOR A RENT FREEZE, p4 | DECIPHERING DE BLASIO'S HOUSING PLAN, p5



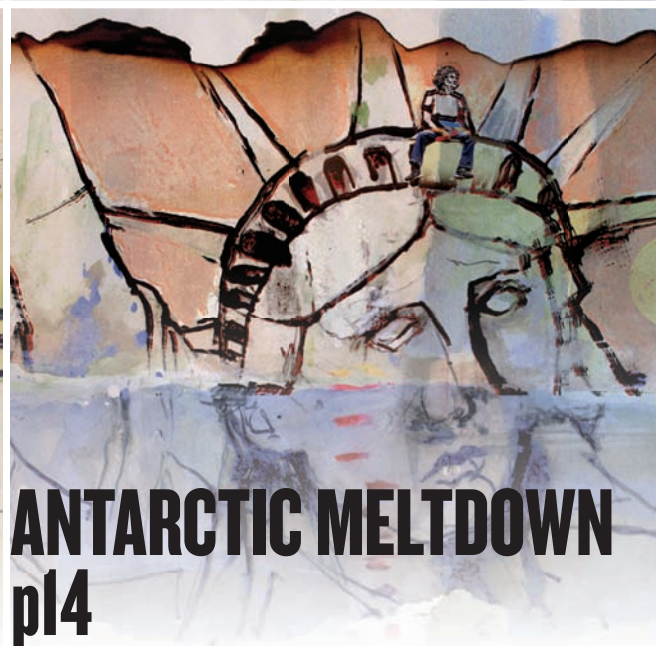
BETH WHITNEY

## #YesAllWomen

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*The Indypendent* is a New York-based free newspaper published 13 times a year on Mondays for our print and online audience of more than 100,000 readers. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 700 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

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## the reader's voice



In response to the #196 article regarding the deportations of 2 million immigrants (“Rallies, Blockades, Hunger Strikes Greet Deportation Milestone,” May *Indypendent*) by President Obama, I feel that both the president and House Speaker John (Bonehead) Boehner are guilty of inept, ineffective leadership in coming up with some kind of immigration reform plan to help those already here.

President Obama’s obliviousness in enacting an executive order to stop the deportations or some type of reasonable or logical immigration reform program is extra troubling. Does the president believe that still carrying out a program to separate families will give him some type of leverage with House members? Hopefully, whatever so-called plan he is brewing will be more substance than rallying cry.

If President Obama is truly gen-

uine about immigration reform, he will need to do more than go before House members and plead his case. If John Boehner is serious about his aspirations for ever-higher office, he needs to act against the delusions and wishes of that right-wing cabal that has hijacked the House. Then maybe, they’ll act like two men who got something done in Washington.

— VICENTE WATSON,  
BROOKLYN

### LISTEN TO THESE TEACHERS!

Giles and Frascella are correct in their assertions about English Language Learners (“Tested by Language,” May *Indypendent*). As a Professor Emerita of Education with a solid linguistics background, I agree entirely with their position. I’d like to add a few questions: Would these students be able to pass a test in Science or Social Studies in their own language? Is the exam testing content knowledge, language, or both? How many of us could take and pass a challenging exam such as the Regents exam in New York...in a second language? We must take a good, hard look at what our goals are with high-stakes tests.

— MERRYL  
from indypendent.org

### AVOID THE BLAME GAME

Immigrant workers (“The Moment We Lost Our Way,” May *Indypendent*) do not devalue American workers. Both are ex-

ploited by corrupt, greedy employers and lawmakers.

— MICHELLE  
from indypendent.org

*Responses to “Art in the Flesh” in the May Indypendent.*

Thanks for the great article. I love your title — Art in the Flesh — can I borrow it for my next show? And your etymology of the word radical — I did not know its root “is” roots. Makes sense though. Hope to see you soon.

— DARA SCHAEFER  
from indypendent.org

Brilliant essay, Bravo!!

— RHARTMANNPHOTOS  
from indypendent.org

A new award-winning documentary, *Risky Business: A Look Inside America’s Adult Film Industry*, examines many of the current issues surrounding the adult film industry, including many of the items addressed in this article regarding Art & The Flesh. The film’s website is riskybusinessthemovie.com.

— DAVID MECH  
from indypendent.org

### PLYING THE FINGERS OF THE BOURGEOIS OFF THE EARTH

Hi Nick,

Like your latest piece (“Web Exclusive: Letter from Karl Marx,” May *Indypendent*). You are say-

ing, it’s another century but it’s still the same issues of struggle between labor and capital and from the looks of things at the moment capital is winning big time.

— STEPHEN MCKENZIE  
from indypendent.org

### DISCUSSING PRIVILEGE

While I agree that the privilege of white men exists (“White Men’s Rage,” February *Indypendent*), it is not easy for us (white men) to observe it. I find that white men are persecuted, not for being privileged, but for not identifying that privilege. It’s seldom that we see the world through others’ eyes, so naturally most white men assume they are working as hard as others and getting by on their merits rather than benefiting from a normalized white advantage.

We need to do a better job of discussing these matters without persecution. It is not fair that white Americans — and particularly white men — have an inherent advantage over all other segments of society, but they will fight to maintain the status quo if they are vilified for something they don’t see.

I don’t mean to sound like an apologist, just someone who never appreciated the extent of my advantage until I began to talk about it with my peers at university.

— FREDERICK PERRY  
from facebook.com/  
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DAN NGUYEN/FLICKR

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE: This year’s annual New York City Pride March will be held on Sunday June 29.

SAT JUNE 14

11–3pm • Free  
NYC COMPOST PROJECT: NATUREFEST. Come celebrate NatureFest, the Staten Island Museum’s annual environmental fair. There will be nature walks, composting demonstrations and arts and crafts. Willowbrook Park  
2 Eton Pl, SI  
718-727-1135 • statenislandmuseum.org

SAT JUNE 14

2pm • Free  
READING: URAYOAN NOEL. Bronx resident, poet and scholar Urayoan Noel will be reading and discussing his works created as a memorial of others from the Bronx as a part of the Bronx Poet Series. Kingsbridge Library  
291 W 231st St, Bronx  
718-548-5656 • nypl.org

SAT JUNE 14

6pm • \$10 Suggested donation  
PARTY: BLUESTOCKINGS’ 15TH BIRTHDAY PARTY AND FUNDRAISER! Celebrate and contribute to the future of this radical bookstore. All proceeds support its continued operation. The celebration will include a musical showcase, art show and spoken word. Bluestockings Bookstore & Café  
172 Allen St  
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

MON JUN 16

6:30pm • Free  
DISCUSSION: TRACKING THE NEW YORK ART WORLD FROM SOHO TO THE BOWERY, BUSHWICK AND BEYOND. Join art historian Ann Fensterstock in a conversation about the last five decades of contemporary art in New York, how artists shape their neighborhoods and vice-versa. Mid-Manhattan Library  
455 5th Ave  
212-340-0863 • nypl.org

MON JUN 16

7–9pm • Free  
FORUM: ARTS AND ACTIVISM. Sponsored by Brooklyn for Peace, panelists will include filmmaker and journalist Raven Rakia,

Brooke McGowan of the Radical Art Initiative and Professor Louie, a spoken word performer and political rapper. Brooklyn Commons  
388 Atlantic Ave  
718-624-5921 • bfp@brooklynpeace.org

WED JUN 18

6–8pm • Free • Register online  
LECTURE: SURVEILLANCE CITY — THE WAR ON DRUGS IN URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS. America’s most disadvantaged neighborhoods are highly surveilled in every corner. Join Alice Goffman, author of *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* and Jamelle Bouie, race reporter for *Slate*, as they discuss the presumption of criminality that underlies this surveillance. The New School  
55 W 13th St, Rm 1202  
212-229-5600 • events.newschoo.edu

FRI JUNE 20

7pm • Free  
DISCUSSION: MARXISM, GENDER AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THEORY. This

meeting is part of the bi-weekly forum, Socialism Series, sponsored by the International Socialist Organization. In this discussion, Marx’s insights in *Capital* will be used in order to better understand the relationship between capitalism and women’s oppression. CUNY Graduate Center, Rm 5/414  
365 5th Ave  
nycsocialist.org

SAT JUNE 21 THRU SUN JUNE 29

Various times • Free  
FESTIVITIES: NYC PRIDE WEEK. Heritage of Pride hosts New York City’s Pride events in commemoration of the Stonewall Riots of 1969. The culminating event, New York City’s Pride March, is one of the biggest pride celebrations in the world and a chance to remember those we have lost to violence and illness. It will be held from 12 to 5pm on Sun, June 29, and Laverne Cox, Rea Carey and Jonathan Groff will be the March’s 2014 Grand Marshals. The march will begin at 36th Street and Fifth Ave., and will end at

Christopher and Greenwich Streets. Line-up is at 11am. For a complete list of events that commemorate and celebrate Pride Week, visit [nycpride.org](http://nycpride.org).

SAT JUNE 21

4pm • \$10 Suggested donation  
SCREENING: *FORWARD EVER: THE KILLING OF A REVOLUTION*. This documentary explores the suspicious circumstances around the 1983 coup that led to the murder of Grenada’s revolutionary prime minister Maurice Bishop and the subsequent U.S. invasion of the Caribbean island nation. Maysles Documentary Center  
343 Lenox Ave/Malcolm X Blvd  
212-537-6843 • maysles.org

MON JUNE 23

6:30pm • Free  
PANEL: LIFE IN A SOCIALIST USA. Frances Goldin, Debby Smith and Michael Steven Smith — co-editors of *Imagine: Living In A Socialist USA* — discuss the many ways life could become more humane and democratic if socialism prevails over capitalism. Mid-Manhattan Library  
455 5th Ave  
212-340-0863 • nypl.org

TUE JUNE 24

7pm • Free  
LECTURE: THE EXPANSION OF ISRAEL THROUGH PALESTINIAN HOUSE DEMOLITIONS. Jeff Halper, author and founder of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, will discuss nonviolent forms of resistance against Israel that include direct action, civil disobedience and international advocacy. Co-sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace and Alwan for the Arts. Alwan for the Arts  
16 Beaver St, 4th Fl  
646-732-3261 • alwanforthearts.org

TUE JUNE 24

7pm • Free  
GATHERING: POLITICAL PRISONER LETTER WRITING FOR CHELSEA MANNING, JEREMY HAMMOND AND BARRETT

BROWN. With guest speaker Abi Hassen of the National Lawyers Guild. Sponsored by Anarchist Black Cross. CAGE83  
83 Hester St  
[nycabc.wordpress.com](http://nycabc.wordpress.com)

WED JUNE 25

7pm • Free  
PRESENTATION: STRIKE BACK: USING THE MILITANT TACTICS OF LABOR’S PAST TO REIGNITE PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONISM TODAY, WITH JOE BURNS. Strike Back examines the struggle of public employees in the 1960s and ’70s to win union representation and collective bargaining rights. This history may provide insights and tactics for today’s generation of public employees facing unprecedented attacks. Bluestockings Bookstore & Café  
172 Allen St  
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

THU JUNE 26

7:30pm • \$6/\$10/\$12  
DISCUSSION: MILITARISM AND AUSTERITY: THE PENTAGON BUDGET TAKES AIM AT THE WORKING CLASS. William Hartung, author of *Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex*, and Michael Zweig, author of *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret*, discuss the impact of the military’s \$500 billion per year budget and what can be done about it. Brooklyn Commons  
388 Atlantic Ave  
[thecommonbrooklyn.org](http://thecommonbrooklyn.org) • [info@thecommonbrooklyn.org](mailto:info@thecommonbrooklyn.org)

TUES JULY 8

7:30pm • Free  
SCREENING: *INEQUALITY FOR ALL*. Directed by Jacob Kornbluth, this 2013 documentary follows former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich as he demonstrates the devastating impact of the growing gap between the super-wealthy and everyone else and urges reforms to address the problem. 99 South 6th St, Bklyn  
212-802-8222 • times-up.org

WED JULY 16

6–8pm • \$5 • Ages 13 and up • Register online  
WORKSHOP: INDOOR COMPOSTING. Join the NYC Compost Project as they give a lesson on how to set up an indoor composting bin. As part of the Sustainability Workshop Series at the Hudson River Park, NYC Compost Project educators will also discuss ways in which we can waste less in the city. Hudson River Park, Pier 45  
[hudsonriverpark.org](http://hudsonriverpark.org)

THRU JUNE 30

Various times • Free  
PHOTO EXHIBIT: HAVANA STREET SCENES. Photographer Helga Busemann’s photos are vivid portraits of a city in transition and were taken during a 2013 cultural exchange organized by the American Friends of the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba. St. Agnes Library  
444 Amsterdam Ave  
212-621-0619 • nypl.org



TULANE PUBLICATIONS

SEE YOU AT PRIDE MARCH: Television star and transgender activist Laverne Cox will be a Grand Marshal.



# 2014: Year of the Rent Freeze?

By Steven Wishnia

Will the city’s Rent Guidelines Board freeze rents this year, as Mayor Bill de Blasio promised when he was running for election?

There are signs that the mayor may renege on what he pledged during his campaign — for example, when he told a Bronx housing forum that it would be unfair to raise rents when almost half the city’s people are living close to or below the poverty level. The Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) — which now has a majority of de Blasio appointees, five out of nine members — left the issue open on May 5. It voted to suggest a range of possible increases for the city’s 1 million rent-stabilized apartments: zero to 3 percent for a one-year lease renewal and 0.5 to 4.5 percent for two years.

The board will set the final guidelines for 2014-15 on June 23. “We’re in an information-gathering phase,” new chair Rachel Godsil said when tenant representative Harvey Epstein asked her to justify her suggested increases. The plight of tenants is “obviously moving,” she said earlier, but the board also has to consider that landlords need revenue to maintain their buildings.

“It’s not going to be easy to get a rent freeze,” says Sheila Garcia, a Bronx housing organizer who de Blasio picked as the RGB’s other tenant member, but she adds, “I think it’s really possible.”

### CURBING HOUSING COSTS

Picking RGB members willing to freeze rents is one of the few things de Blasio can do to curb housing costs, as state law denies the city home rule over rent regulations. Under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the RGB routinely rubber-stamped rent increases, to the point where former chair Marvin Markus was nicknamed “Marvin Markup.” In contrast, says Garcia, the new public members are paying serious attention to the data beyond landlords’ costs and are returning phone calls from tenant groups. On May 5, new public member Cecilia Joza joined Epstein and Garcia in voting for a 6 percent rent rollback, but the proposal lost 6-3.

### HOW RENT STABILIZATION WORKS

New York City’s rent stabilization law covers approximately 1 million apartments, which comprise about half of all rental units. To qualify, a tenant must live in a building of six rental units or more built before January 1, 1974, or in a newer building that went into rent stabilization because the landlord received certain tax breaks.

The Rent Guidelines Board decides on annual rent increases for rent-stabilized apartments. Eight of the RGB’s nine members are appointed by the mayor to terms ranging from two to four years, while the chair serves for as long as the mayor desires. Two of the board’s members represent landlord interests, two represent tenant interests and the other five appointees are “public” members.

Landlords can also increase rents when they make major capital improvements to their buildings, a loophole many landlords abuse by inflating costs and passing them on to tenants as higher monthly rents. Vacant apartments are deregulated when their rent surpasses \$2,500 per month.

The city’s rent laws have been substantially weakened since the mid-1990s. Over the past two decades hundreds of thousands of units of rent-stabilized housing have moved out of the system. Tenant activists hope to strengthen the state law that allows New York City to have rent-stabilized housing when it comes up for renewal in 2015.

For more, see [metcouncilonhousing.org](http://metcouncilonhousing.org) or [tenantsandneighbors.org](http://tenantsandneighbors.org).

However, longtime housing activist Michael McKee of Tenants PAC suspects that the de Blasio administration is discreetly opposing a rent freeze because it doesn’t want to upset the city’s economic oligarchy. “My view is that de Blasio needs the real-estate industry to cooperate with his new production plan, and is afraid to alienate them lest they say they will not build,” McKee says.

The housing plan the mayor released in May (see page 5), he notes, avoided calling for the repeal of the state vacancy-decontrol law, which de Blasio had pledged to support as a candidate. The mayor says his housing plan will “preserve” 120,000 affordable units, but somewhere between 30,000 and 60,000 rent-stabilized apartments are deregulated each year, McKee says.

On May 21, deputy mayor Alicia Glen, who is in charge of housing policy, told a Harvard Club forum that she didn’t think anyone believed that a rent freeze “is good for the rental stock, any portion of the rental stock,” although she added that a smaller increase than usual would be justified.

### RENTERS’ REALITIES

Tenant groups have three main arguments about why even a small increase would be unfair.

First, it would ignore the reality of renters’ incomes. An increase of less than 2 percent for a one-year lease and 4 percent for two years would be the lowest in the 45-year history of rent stabilization — but would be more than the 1 percent annual raises that teachers and transit workers, who have two of the strongest labor unions in the city, will be getting in the first years of their new contracts.

Second, the RGB voted in substantial increases throughout the recession, including 4 percent and 7.75 percent last year, despite high unemployment and record levels of homelessness. From 2009 to 2013, it allowed increases that added up to more than 15 percent for one-year leases and 20 percent for two-year leases — while city workers went



**ZERO PERCENT:** Tenants rally outside a May 5 RGB meeting.

four years without getting a raise.

Third, the board primarily considers landlords’ costs to determine what increases are justified, and doesn’t look at their overall incomes. In 2009, the RGB’s Income and Expenses (I&E) study found that owners’ net operating income had risen more than twice as fast as its Price Index of Operating Costs (PIOC, pronounced “pie-ock”). Tenants also argue that the PIOC exaggerates how much landlords’ costs are going up, as it estimates that figure based on the price of items such as fuel oil or light bulbs and not on what they actually spend. (Landlords claim it underestimates their costs).

### RENT FREEZE OR RENT REDUCTION?

While more than 40 housing and community organizations have demanded a rent freeze, many are also arguing that rents should be reduced. “For the past five years the board unconscionably and indefensibly inflated owner incomes while a homeless and affordability crisis mounted,” former RGB executive director Timothy L. Collins, now a tenant lawyer, told a board meeting May 1. “Rents must be rolled back. While this may seem like an extreme recommendation, it is made in the wake of an extreme abuse of the system.”

Board data from 2012 show that net operating income went up for the eighth year in a row. On average, owners of rent-stabilized housing now spend roughly 60 percent of their income on running and maintaining their buildings, leaving almost 40 percent for debt service and profit. Before the recession, Collins calculates, they spent about 64 percent — so bringing what landlords spend on operating costs back to the proportion it was in 2008 would require lowering rents by 6 percent.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS

More than 200 tenants and supporters turned out to protest at the May 5 preliminary vote despite abnormally tight security, significantly more than how many showed up in the last few years. The tenant movement is now focusing on getting people to testify at the four public hear-

### RENT GUIDELINES BOARD 2014 SCHEDULE

**THURSDAY, JUNE 12**  
Public Hearing (Public Testimony)  
Repertory Theatre of Hostos Community College  
450 Grand Concourse  
Bronx  
5–8pm

**MONDAY, JUNE 16**  
Public Hearing (Public Testimony)  
Emigrant Savings Bank Building  
49-51 Chambers St  
2–6pm

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18**  
Public Hearing (Public Testimony)  
Brooklyn Borough Hall  
209 Joralemon St  
Brooklyn  
5–8pm

**THURSDAY, JUNE 19**  
Public Hearing (Public Testimony)  
Queens Borough Hall  
120-55 Queens Blvd  
Kew Gardens  
5–8pm

**MONDAY, JUNE 23**  
**PUBLIC MEETING (FINAL VOTE)**  
The Great Hall at Cooper Union  
7 East 7th St  
6pm

For more information or to sign up to testify, go to [nycrgb.org/html/about/meetings.html](http://nycrgb.org/html/about/meetings.html), or contact Met Council, [metcouncilonhousing.org](http://metcouncilonhousing.org).

ings the board has scheduled for June. Under Bloomberg, the RGB usually took testimony from tenants and landlords only during the workday in Manhattan. This year, it will hold hearings in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens that will start at 5pm.

“Tenants have to come to the outer-borough hearings to talk about their experiences,” says Garcia.

Ultimately, she says, the question is, “What kind of city do we want to live in?” Do we want to have a city where an office cleaner can afford an apartment, or one where working people can’t make enough to live on their own? “I can’t tell you how many families I know are doubling up,” she says.

### SIX YEARS OF RENT INCREASES

YEAR	1 YEAR	2 YEARS	EXTRAS
2008	4.5%	8.5%	\$45/\$85 minimum if there 6 years or longer
2009	3%	6%	\$30/\$60 minimum if there 6 years or longer
2010	2.25%	4.5%	
2011	3.75%	6.25%	
2012	2%	4%	\$20/\$40 minimum if there 6 years or longer
2013	4%	7.75%	

— Independent Staff



# A Tale of Two Housing Plans

## DE BLASIO'S DRIVE TO BUILD BIG UNDERMINES NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION

By Tom Angotti

Four months into his term, Mayor Bill de Blasio, who continues to declare his commitment to reducing inequalities in New York City, issued a 116-page report, “Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan.” But do the many big and little proposals in the plan add up to a break with the Bloomberg years of unabashed promotion of luxury development and gentrification, or are they a kinder, gentler version of the same?

Housing and community activists and all those concerned about inequality are trying to sort it all out, but it really doesn't make much sense unless we look at it as two housing plans. One is a plan for new housing development and the other is a plan for keeping rents down and preserving neighborhoods. The problem is that the two plans contradict one another, and it looks like the development plan will be the priority.

### BUILD, BUILD, BUILD

The de Blasio development plan got the biggest headlines because it is the most concrete (literally), immediate and likely to be implemented. It includes a giant housing development scheme that promotes the creation of 200,000 new affordable housing units in the city over the next 10 years, 40 percent of them in new construction. Added to this are promises of new opportunities for luxury development. The city would rezone in strategic areas to promote new building, allow for taller buildings, let landowners transfer their development rights to hot locations, continue tax and infrastructure subsidies to developers and streamline land use, environmental and building regulations. It's no wonder that *Crain's* reported that the city's largest real estate developers are gushing with praise for the plan. Construction unions are also satisfied.

The real estate moguls can't conceal what too many have a hard time recognizing: the new mayor's plan would not undo the enormous opportunities for new private development opened up by Bloomberg. It volunteers even more government help for those who need it the least. The

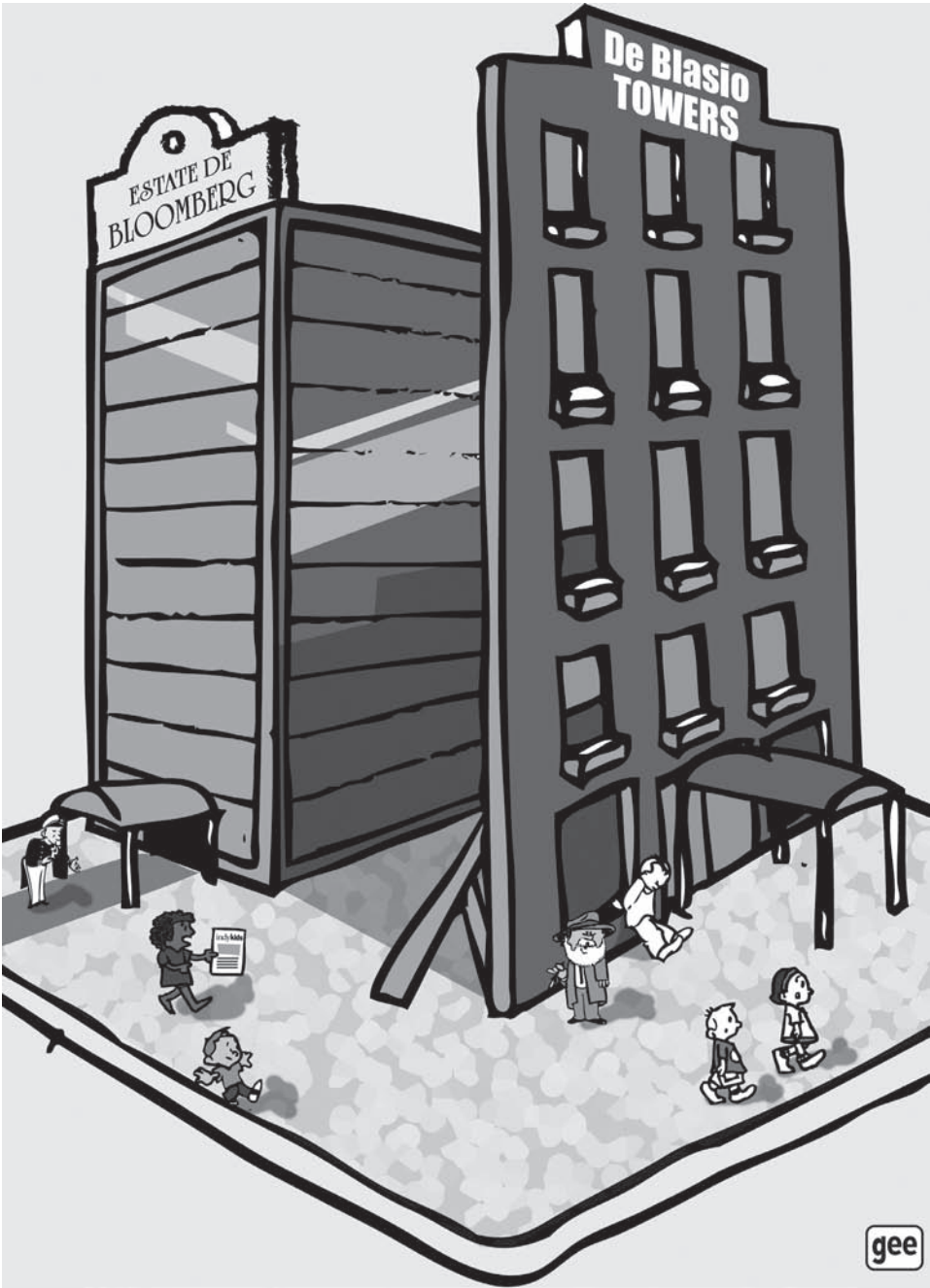
de Blasio “affordable” housing proposals are fundamentally no different than Bloomberg's, which produced approximately 165,000 units of housing during the 12 years he was in office. The new plan would shuffle the definitions of affordability, making a larger proportion of units available for people in low-income brackets without changing the way “low-income” is defined (50-80 percent of the Area Median Income, which can be up to \$67,000 a year for a family of four).

### THE PRESERVATION PLAN: GOOD INTENTIONS

The other de Blasio plan speaks to the real concerns of people who find themselves facing incredibly high rent increases, intimidation and the illegal flaunting of rent and eviction controls by landlords. This is basically a community preservation proposal. In his introduction to the plan, de Blasio says we must “protect neighborhoods” and “engage communities.” In an indirect reference to the phenomenon many of us know as gentrification — a word that never appears in the document — the mayor states, “If you're in a community where affordability is dropping, we want to protect it.”

The preservation plan speaks to the widespread frustration and anger of renters and homeowners who were and are victims of the speculative real estate fever that forces them to move out of neighborhoods they have lived in for decades and generations. This de Blasio plan promises that new housing, better services and community involvement will allow more residents to stay. It echoes calls by tenant groups to repeal the State's Urstadt Law and allow the city, not Albany, to govern rent regulations. It also takes a step away from using homeless shelters and toward creating decent housing opportunities for people in greatest need.

But when you get down to the details, the plan is filled with only small steps forward and vague promises. In some areas, it makes only weak gestures toward solving deep flaws in rent regulation. For example, it responds to the structural flaws in the city's housing court by recommending more pro bono lawyers, not a system



overhaul. It is silent on the tenant demand to stop removing housing units from rent regulation, even though protecting and improving rent regulation is surely the best way to support affordable housing and stabilize neighborhoods.

### MASKING THE PROBLEM

In the mayor's plan, creating new housing

remains the overriding mission, not saving neighborhoods. The term displacement appears in references to two specific programs and in two footnotes, but is never used to denote a fundamental problem. Since the proposal never targets the basic problem, it can't really help resolve it. When all is said and done, the 200,000 affordable housing units in the first plan are touted as the solution to the problems addressed in the second plan. In practice, under Bloomberg and now under de Blasio, the promised building boom masks the deeper problems of gentrification and displacement, and the even deeper questions of racial, ethnic and class divisions. It appears that the authors of the document avoided raising the issues of gentrification and displacement not just because they are politically charged but because the use of these terms would question the fundamental objectives.

The glaring truth that the new mayor has not sought to hide is that during the Bloomberg years more affordable housing

### THE BEST AND THE WORST OF DE BLASIO'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

#### THUMBS UP

- Moves away from using homeless shelters and toward creating housing opportunities for people in greatest need
- Makes a larger proportion of units of affordable housing available to low-income tenants
- Recommends providing more pro bono lawyers for tenants who land in housing court
- Proposes to beef up the capacity of housing and planning agencies that Bloomberg hollowed out

#### THUMBS DOWN

- Does not address the deeper problems of gentrification and displacement
- Volunteers more government help to private developers who do not need it
- Does not change the way “low-income” is defined for those seeking affordable housing
- Does little to stop the removal of housing units from rent regulation
- Shows a continued interest in private development on New York City Housing Authority properties



# NYPD Unreformed

By Nick Malinowski

Much of the establishment left has praised and supported Mayor Bill de Blasio for promoting what he constantly describes as a progressive agenda. Recent breaks with the Bloomberg administration in paid sick leave, access to pre-school education, housing policy and a promise to increase the city's minimum wage have garnered attention. In general, de Blasio's commissioner appointments at city agencies — also applauded by liberals — reflect an apparently genuine interest in policy change. However, more than five months into his administration, the mayor has done little to make good on campaign promises to reform a New York Police Department that had come to be seen by many as running off the rails.

A few hollow actions — such as withdrawing a Bloomberg-era appeal in the federal stop-and-frisk litigation and disbanding the already defunct Zone Assessment Unit that was used to monitor the Muslim community — have drawn muted praise from some police accountability advocates, but the NYPD under new Commissioner Bill Bratton still looks very much the same as it has in years past. More troubling, early data on this year's policing trends point to an NYPD that is already taking a more expansive and invasive approach under the guise of progressive ideals.

## SUBWAY PERFORMERS, JAYWALKERS AND THE HOMELESS

In the first months of 2014 there were dramatic increases in arrests of subway performers, jaywalkers and the homeless. Trespassing arrests are up nearly 30 percent in 2014. Bratton has recently taken on policing graffiti with increased zeal, arming police officers with their own spray paint to cover up tags — and calling graffiti “the first sign of the disease that is criminal behavior.” At a recent function at the conservative Manhattan Institute, Bratton decried vandals as “bastards” who drive him “out of [his] mind.” Just weeks before, in response to a protest by mothers whose sons had been killed by the NYPD — including those of Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell and Ramarley Graham — Bratton implied that any sort of criminality justified police shootings.

In larger trends, felony arrests are down, while arrests for misdemeanors and violations are up, according to figures given by de Blasio in his presentation of the NYPD's proposed 2014 budget. In March, the NYPD made more arrests for marijuana possession than in any month over the second half of 2013 — doubling down on a practice that candidate de Blasio had decried as “unjust and unfair” last summer. The racial inequities that were highlighted by de Blasio then continued unabated. Over the first three months of 2014 just seven people were arrested for marijuana in the mostly white neighborhood of Park Slope. A little further east in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Crown Heights, 130 people were arrested for similar infractions; in the predominantly Black neighborhood of East New York, there were 438 marijuana arrests.

Bratton's philosophical adherence to many aspects of “Broken Windows” policing — a term coined by current NYPD consultant George Kelling and others to describe how minor disorder leads to serious crime — underpins the increases in low-level arrests for behaviors that Bratton considers

to be disorderly.

This fundamental assumption behind “Broken Windows” has never been proven to be correct. In fact, the most authoritative studies on the subject refute its efficacy as a crime-fighting tool. Because of the extreme collateral consequences of a criminal conviction in New York State — loss of access to everything from housing to financial aid and employment — it's a pretty big gamble to try out on the 400,000 or so people who are arrested each year in New York. Of course Bratton, in the time-honored tradition of police commissioners in New York City, ensures that this experimentation plays out primarily in communities with little access to political power — communities that are low-income, largely immigrant, Black or Latino.

The new police commissioner's zero-tolerance approach led to the death of Jerome Murdough, a 56-year-old veteran who was arrested for sleeping in an abandoned public housing stairwell. He was unable to make \$2,500 bail and died two weeks later on February 15 in solitary confinement at Rikers Island; an unnamed corrections staffer told news reporters at the time that the man “basically baked to death” after temperatures in his cell soared past 100 degrees. The death is tragic and even from a policy standpoint, makes little sense. It cost at least \$6,000 to house Murdough during his stay in city jails; costs associated with his arrest, criminal defense and prosecution add at least another \$3,000. Briefly, the city could have paid Murdough's rent for more than a year; the benefits of arresting him are hard to comprehend, particularly for his family now.

The NYPD under Bratton remains, in broad strokes, essentially similar to the NYPD under Ray Kelly and Michael Bloomberg — with the chilling of dissent from police watchdog groups being the primary differentiation. But Bratton's history, in addition to more recent comments, points to a future that is perhaps even more sinister.

## SURVEILLANCE STATE

Bratton has, with little public opposition, laid out the groundwork for a far more invasive police presence throughout the city and has spoken publicly, in a way Ray Kelly never did, about the essential role of the police in facilitating gentrification. Throughout his career Bratton has taken a military position with regard to the role of the police — he sees his troops on the right side of a war against “criminals.” He is forever casting an expanding “crime-fighting” net. Bratton has stated his support for the use of drones for surveillance and will soon be arming the 35,000 officers of the NYPD with tablets with which they can quickly scan license plates, track vehicles as they move about the city and check warrants; facial recognition

software is surely not far behind.

“The challenge in the 21st century is how do we keep the trust of the public when we are going to be so potentially invasive into the privacy of their lives through our technology,” Bratton said in a recent appearance at the 92nd Street Y.

A memo leaked from the Civilian Complaint Review Board, an NYPD oversight agency, indicated that police have begun to use summonses as a pretext for searches and frisks, even without suspicion of weapon possession — the constitutional threshold for a frisk during a police encounter. Searches subsequent to arrests have a long tradition at the NYPD and other police departments, but searches subsequent to summonses — of which there are 500,000 a year in New York for behaviors ranging from spitting, playing loud music and having open containers of alcohol to biking on the sidewalk — would provide a level of surveillance authority that has yet to be seen inside the United States. While demographic information for summonses is not recorded by the NYPD, a recent study by the CUNY School of Law showed that they are almost exclusively doled out in neighborhoods that are not majority white.

In Bratton's hands, even less overtly offensive programs such as Vision Zero, a de Blasio plan ostensibly aimed at reducing pedestrian fatalities, has become simply another foothold through which to extend police authority. George Kelling, who previously told the

*New York Times* that traffic stops were an untapped resource as a pretext for other investigations, recently suggested that traffic enforcement be used to address street crime. “A lot of criminals are bad drivers,” Kelling explained at a panel discussion last November.

Most recently, Bratton has been beating the drum for predictive policing — the use of data analytics to create algorithms with the potential to help police pre-empt crime. But if the data inputs are culled from police resources, they will reflect the ideologies and biases of the department. According to the ACLU of Massachusetts's Privacy SOS blog: “The algorithms simply reproduce the unjust policing system we've got, and dangerously, add a veneer of ‘objectivity’ to that problem.”

Nick Malinowski is a social worker, journalist and activist based in Brooklyn.

## WHEN A JUDGE GOES ROGUE

The trial and conviction of Occupy Wall Street activist Cecily McMillan for allegedly assaulting a NYPD police officer shocked many observers who watched Judge Ronald Zweibel repeatedly side with the prosecution. In a web exclusive, our legal columnist Ann Schneider explains how judges and prosecutors are often able to render the promise of trial by jury meaningless. For more, see [indypendent.org/rogue-judges](http://indypendent.org/rogue-judges).





# The Real Reason WFP Cut a Deal with Cuomo

BY CHARLES LENCHNER

As the Working Families Party (WFP) gathered for its state convention on May 31, it appeared the small but influential third party was set to turn New York politics on its head and challenge incumbent Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Progressives' frustration with "Governor 1%" has been building for years, to the point where statewide polls this spring showed a hypothetical WFP candidate getting more than 20 percent of the vote in a three-way race with Cuomo and Republican nominee Rob Astorino. And the party had a candidate waiting in the wings: Zephyr Teachout, a Fordham Law School professor and former Howard Dean campaign aide who was the favorite of many of the state committee's 200 members. Yet by the end of a raucous convention, the WFP endorsed Cuomo, just as it had in 2010. In return, the party received a string of promises that no one believes the governor intends to keep — including WFP insiders.

The endorsement deal dismayed many WFP supporters who ask how a left-leaning party with strong ties to labor unions could back a right-wing governor who has cut the pensions of state workers, lavished support on charter schools and handed out tax breaks to millionaires while putting much of the state government on an austerity budget.

## EYE ON THE STATE SENATE

What critics of the WFP's endorsement are missing is that the strategy isn't about trusting Cuomo, but boxing him in so he won't interfere with the real goal: restoring control of the State Senate to the Democrats. Large unions are promising to help bankroll this effort, which will almost certainly include deployment of the WFP field staff. And some of this has already happened; SEU 1199 has committed to only supporting Democrats this year, while the UFT has told Independent Democratic Caucus (IDC) members they need to rejoin the Democrats 'or else.'

Republicans have controlled the State Senate almost continuously for the past 50 years. The Democrats won a majority in the 2012 election, but soon afterwards, five Democratic state senators announced they would caucus with the Republicans. It's widely believed that Cuomo encouraged this accord because it takes the pressure off of him to act on progressive legislation that regularly passes the Democratic-held State Assembly but dies in the Senate.

Senate Democrats have almost no money in their coffers. However, the millions that will now flow to contested races will enable the WFP to put boots on the ground in key districts and organize the kind of get-out-the-vote efforts that swing elections. They will target the five renegade members of the IDC plus a couple of vulnerable Long Island Republicans.

If the WFP can bring the Democrats to power in the Senate, a raft of progressive legislation becomes more likely, including a minimum wage increase, campaign finance reform, more funding for public schools and decriminalization of marijuana. These are



Zephyr Teachout

all issues that Cuomo was forced to endorse publicly during the WFP convention. The WFP's strategy is a gamble. The union leaders who cut a deal with Cuomo will feel like it was worth it if they can win a substantial boost to the minimum wage. However, if the Senate doesn't change hands, don't expect Cuomo to go out of his way to help the WFP.

## TEACHOUT'S NEXT MOVE

Meanwhile, Teachout and her supporters are now looking to run against Cuomo in the September 9 Democratic primary. As *The Independent* went to press, Teachout had not made a final decision to run but was moving quickly to raise the money to mount a credible campaign against Cuomo in the primary.

Should Teachout run, she will pressure Cuomo from the left. She could also help drive the turnout of progressive voters in districts where the WFP is trying to win primary races against the five renegade Democratic state senators. In the process of building a campaign and mobilizing supporters, Teachout may give birth to something akin to the WFP, but without the dominance of organizations that prioritize transactional politics.

*Charles Lenchner is executive director of Organizing 2.0 and former director of online organizing for the Working Families Party.*

### GREENS TAKE AIM AT CUOMO, WFP

*Gov. Andrew Cuomo will also be challenged again this year by the Greens, who argue that they, not the WFP, are New York's genuine left third party. For The Independent's interview with New York City educator and Green Party lieutenant governor candidate Brian Jones, see [independent.org/interview-brian-jones](http://independent.org/interview-brian-jones).*



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## De Blasio's Housing Plan

*Continued from page 5*

units were lost than built. Yet there is a huge disconnect as the new mayor, instead of learning from this cautionary tale, has doubled down and sought to one-up Bloomberg on the construction front.

At bottom, developers typically argue, the housing problem is all about supply and demand. Let us increase the supply, they say, and there will be more housing to go around for all. This, not rent regulation, will keep rents from rising. That's good old trickle-down economics, which never works. Indeed, we've just come through a couple of decades in which the total housing supply has grown dramatically, and so have rents, but there was also a huge loss of low-rent housing. Over the last 20 years almost 250,000 units of rental housing were deregulated.

### THE LAND MARKET

The trickle-down approach conceals a fundamental truth: the market driving everything is the land market, not some mythical housing market. Developers and investors choose areas where future land values are higher than current ones and try to build on this land so they can make a profit from rising land values. This is why the elementary principles of real estate are "location, location, location." It is also why "dislocation" or displacement is a virtually inevitable companion to new development. It is the reason our neighborhoods need better means for controlling land use, not just more housing.

The city's housing plan states that the problem is that supply does not match demand. The solution: increase the supply and, through government subsidies and regulatory actions, make sure that more new units are "affordable." But the explanations for the presumed shortfall are suspect. While noting the decline in new building since 2008, there is no acknowledgment that it had anything to do with the collapse of the mortgage market. Also, the plan claims the city's population is bound to increase in the next decade, and the need for smaller housing units along with it. By encouraging the development of smaller housing units it would actually welcome more gentrification. Younger single adults, professionals and the so-called creative class pay higher rents and are more mobile and less aware of rent laws. In effect, by shaping the future supply it would also shape future demand.

Another way to understand the huge gap between the two plans is to look at de Blasio's outspoken commitment to public-private partnerships as the basic underpinning of city housing policy. The aim of City Hall is to "leverage markets." While the mayor hopes to put up \$8.2 billion in city dollars, he expects that the vast majority of the funds, \$30 billion, will come

from the private sector, which is of course in the game to build more, make money and produce affordable housing whenever it helps their bottom line and buys community support.

### OVERLOOKING COMMUNITIES

During last year's election campaign, de Blasio smartly recognized the well of discontent with Bloomberg's elite, top-down approach that ignored local voices and bought loyalties from potential opposition. Yet both his development and preservation plans exclude any decisive role for communities in the planning process. While the mayor hopes to hire more professionals in the city's planning and housing agencies, he offers no new opportunities for neighborhoods to make their own voices heard beyond the inadequate public meetings run by the agents of City Hall. Under the Bloomberg administration, the City Planning Department pushed 140 rezoning proposals through the approvals process, using a skillful Madison Avenue approach with lots of public meetings, romantic pictures of new development and vows of sincerity by city officials. Bloomberg's manufactured participation buried grassroots plans and the now-defunct Campaign for Community-Based Planning. For the city-planning machine, communities became consumers and not the makers of their own destinies.

De Blasio's planning director, Carl Weisbrod, promises more of the same and is further legitimized by the mayor's commitment to use zoning to increase the number of affordable housing units. Weisbrod is a skillful negotiator and played a key role in the redevelopment of Times Square and Lower Manhattan after 9/11. Now he will hone his skills by confronting neighborhood resistance to higher-density luxury housing development and negotiate the always-limited supply of affordable housing units to pacify the opposition.

Notably absent in the housing plans are the city's 59 community boards. These, for better and for worse, are the only official institution for democratic land use decision-making at the neighborhood level. But they have no professional planning staff, a bare-bones budget and appointed volunteer members who often fail to represent large sectors of neighborhoods. De Blasio's plans do not even mention community boards. By allowing these forgotten institutions to languish, developers and their allies in city government can continue to cut their deals with local groups behind closed doors — and at the same time wag their fingers at community boards for being a charade!

The absence of community power is glaring in the housing plan's proposals to assemble and develop small vacant lots around the city. There is no hint

of a community-based planning process that would give neighborhoods — many of which have struggled with abandoned property for decades — the chance to say which lots should be for housing and which ones dedicated to public space, community gardens or other purposes.

### WILL TENANT GROUPS FOLLOW OR LEAD?

Now that we know the city's two-pronged strategy, the open question is what progressive individuals, groups and coalitions will do. Do we have a strategy?

One of the strongest impulses of those who fight for affordable housing is to accept the power of developers as inevitable, leaving us to negotiate for what we can get from the development plan — more "affordable" housing or other community benefits. This defeatist notion forces us to accept the bedrock neoliberal philosophy that private power is not only a given but the only legitimate power. Government, therefore, must follow the lead of private capital. This was the path charted under Bloomberg and we have forgotten that resistance is an alternative.

A particularly vocal segment of the community-based organizations allied with nonprofit housing developers and political groups close to the mayor and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party were not only involved in shaping the housing plan but stand to benefit from the largesse flowing from new public-private development. For example, the Association for

Neighborhood and Housing Developers (ANHD), the city's largest coalition of housing groups, prominently advocates mandatory inclusionary zoning and continues to press for more development opportunities that would benefit nonprofit housing developers in their alliance, even though many of their grassroots members consider preservation a priority.

The groups focused on preserving and strengthening rent regulations and limiting landlord abuses are building alliances for the forthcoming battles in Albany to strengthen rent regulation. Many openly deal with and name gentrification and displacement. New tenant coalitions such as the Crown Heights Tenants Union have emerged in neighborhoods facing increasing development pressure. New alliances are forming between tenant and community groups and nonprofit housing developers, but the city's bifurcated housing plan may very well pull them away from each other. The divided housing movement is in a weak position when it comes to moving housing policy further in a progressive direction. Until we develop a unified strategy of our own, the responses to the city's dual housing policies will also remain weak.

*Tom Angotti is professor of urban affairs and planning at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He is the author of New York For Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate (MIT Press, 2008).*

## PRIVATE SECTOR PARADIGM

A central premise of Mayor de Blasio's affordable housing plan is that the only way the public sector can act is in tandem with the private sector. De Blasio's plan includes, for example:

- A continuing interest in private development on public housing land. Referring to the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the plan targets "underused NYCHA land and development rights." While proclaiming a willingness to take into consideration "tenant needs," the plan treats public housing as a "land use" problem and real estate opportunity, and not as many large communities imbedded within larger communities. While Bloomberg's proposal to build luxury housing on eight Manhattan public housing sites has been put on hold, the notion that the authority's green spaces are a gold mine for development opportunities persists.
- The introduction of mandatory inclusionary zoning in areas ripe for development. Inclusionary zoning allows developers to build higher when they provide some affordable housing units (under the current rules 20 percent of the units must be affordable; new rules may increase this proportion). Under Bloomberg, inclusionary zoning was an option subject to the discretion of the developer, and helped to sell zoning proposals to wary communities. The de Blasio administration wants to make inclusionary zoning mandatory in areas that it chooses to re-zone and would continue public subsidies for the inclusionary housing units. The problem with this is that inclusionary zoning will be an even greater weapon for developers to wield against communities. The majority of new housing, invariably built for the luxury market, is still bound to drive up housing prices and rents and displace more affordable units than it creates. That is what happened in the Bloomberg years. Let's call it what it is: gentrification and displacement, not reducing inequalities.
- Allowing landowners to sell their unused development rights to desirable "hot" spots in the real estate market. This is a dream of big real estate investors that would create a sort of financial market in land use and allow high-rise areas to get even higher, thus maximizing profits for land speculators.

— Tom Angotti



# Thinking Inside the Box

By KEITH WILLIAMS

Even in Williamsburg, a neighborhood seemingly overrun by absurd, futuristic designs, there is something unique about 351 Keap Street: it's constructed entirely from shipping containers, steel units normally used to convey cargo across the seas.

After five months of preparation, contractor David Boyle and architect Michele Bertomen pieced together the six corrugated metal boxes in a single day in January 2010. The home has all of the amenities one would expect in a city dwelling — a far cry from the spartan image shipping containers often conjure.

With Mayor Bill de Blasio pushing an ambitious plan to create 200,000 affordable units over the next 10 years, we wondered: could the administration replicate the Williamsburg feat on a larger scale?

It's a tempting idea, as shipping containers have a number of advantages. They're strong and durable; each in the Williamsburg home had spent over a decade ferrying goods around the world through all kinds of weather.

They're also inexpensive. The couple's home cost \$400,000 to construct, according to DNAinfo.com, including \$100,000 in loan interest while they dealt with multi-year push-back from the Department of Buildings. That's still well under the \$500,000 average to erect a "typical" residential building in the same space.

What might be a sustainable model for large-scale container-home construction has developed slowly over the last 20 years. An early leader in the field was Urban Space Management, a company in Britain. Two of their turn-of-the-century designs were built expressly as living spaces.

The aptly named Container City I was completed in 2001. Located in London's Dockyards area, it used 15 shipping crates, each measuring 40' x 8' x 8', to create 12 studios. Built next door in 2002, Container City II expanded on the idea of its predecessor — literally. It combined shipping units to create spaces as large as 550 square feet.

In Asia, architecture firms are toying with newer concepts. LOT-EK is finishing an elliptical dormitory complex in Guangdong, China, where 100-plus residents will be able to gather in an open central area.

And then there's OVA Studio's proposed Hive-Inn, a 340-foot-tall Hong Kong hotel built of shipping containers placed in a steel lattice. Containers are to be removed or added as needed by a crane sitting atop the structure.

These social and temporary aspects are at the heart of containers' potential role in New York's response to future catastrophes. Since 2008, the city's Office of Emergency Management has worked with other agencies on a container-based plan for disaster housing.

The project, the Urban Post-Disaster Housing Prototype Program, was born from a 2008 competition called "What If New York City..." the ellipsis hinting at an apocalyptic occurrence. Entrants were asked to help a fictional neighborhood hit by a Category 3 Hurricane, leaving 38,000 families homeless. (In a twist of irony, the plan was almost in place in October 2012, when funding was diverted to recovery efforts from Superstorm Sandy).

In April 2014, OEM finally put the plan to the test, building a five-container "townhouse" next to its Downtown Brooklyn office. With four bedrooms on three floors, the steel structure leaves room to spare in its 100' x 40' lot on Cadman Plaza East.

The model eschews traditional shipping containers in favor of custom-built units, offsetting several problems with the transport carriers. While still 40 feet long, the OEM containers are 12-foot wide and high, making their ceilings more tolerable than the smaller boxes used in Container City and elsewhere.

Shipping containers are also finicky when it comes to regulating temperature. The OEM model has insulation built into the walls, far preferable to the retrofitting needed for a retired seafaring vessel.

The OEM building is modeled after nearby brownstones. If officials wanted to replicate the Asian ideas though, it seems the sky's the limit: representatives of both LOT-EK and OVA told *The Independent* their designs could be built much higher with proper engineering.

For now, the city appears intent on using these structures on an as-needed basis, with an important benefit: they'll allow community members to remain in their neighborhood — and to play a role in its recovery.



GIULIA OLSSON

**LOW-COST CONSTRUCTION:** This home on 351 Keap St. in Williamsburg is made from six corrugated shipping containers. Such designs are slowly gaining popularity around the world.

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# Now All Men

By Nicholas Powers

**I** don't know why you girls aren't attracted to me," he said into the camera. "But I will punish you all for it."

The next day, on May 24, news headlines said that a young man named Elliot Rodger in Isla Vista, California, drove around stabbing and shooting until six people were dead. He crashed his car and shot himself dead, leaving families to mourn slain loved ones. And he left behind a 137-page autobiographical manifesto and a collection of YouTube videos; in one entitled *Retribution*, he said to women: "I don't know what you don't see in me. I'm the perfect guy and yet you throw yourselves at these obnoxious men instead of me, the supreme gentleman."

Misogyny: the hatred of women. It is the emotional atmosphere of a patriarchal society that, like an acidic fog, burns everyone. We breathe it, walk in it, make our lives inside it, forgetting it's there until loud gunfire comes from a man like Rodger, who is now the face of male supremacy. But after he fades from the news, we will still be left with ongoing violence against women. More than three American women a day are killed by a current or former intimate partner. In 2010, 85,593 women were raped in the United States: that's 235 a day, and because rape is markedly underreported, even those numbers are low. Women still contend with a wage gap and a glass ceiling. In the Global South, at least 150 million girls have had their genitals sheared off as a "rite of passage." Women will still be sex-trafficked. And of course, women are killed before birth; over 90 million were aborted in India and China because parents did not want the burden of a girl.

In the United States, women saw in Rodger's misogynist killing spree an extreme form of the violence they live with every day. The Twitter hashtag #YesAllWomen became a public forum for sharing stories of male violence, spanning from microaggressions to rape. Yet many of us men can't see ourselves in Rodger. Or read the stories of women's fear or anger or hurt without laughing (yes, I heard men laughing about it on the subway) or dismissing it as the hysterics of overly sensitive women. We choose not to listen because if we did, it would destroy our self-image, by showing how women too often see us: as tormentors, oblivious and arrogant, who cause pain they are too scared or tired or too hopeless to even talk about.

## BOYS WILL BE BOYS

Why are we killing women? I know, I know. An instant defensive wall rises in the brain. I'm not hurting women, I don't gun them down or rape or harass them. Nor do my boys. It's not all men!

You're right, it's not all men, it's not you. Relax. You're off the hook. It's the Boko Haram or the Black guys on the street corner. No, it's the Puerto Ricans during their annual parade. Maybe the Indian men who left two raped girls hanging dead from a tree? Better yet, it's the medieval Saudis who won't let women drive. Yes, it's always someone else, somewhere else. It will never be you or me.

And yet, every woman I talk to has a story. Every, single one. At Bed-Stuy's Civil Service Café, I asked two women about sex-

ism. One told me of being paid less than her male boss while doing his work. The other said she pretended to be made of steel in order to not be hurt by sexist comments at her job.

Later, a friend told me that while drinking at a male friend's house she blacked out and woke up to find him thrusting inside her. After his orgasm, he got up and asked if his cousin in the next room "could get some too."

During the New York summer, men's eyes transform into giant tongues licking women up and down. Participating in everyday guy talk is like passing a pair of scissors around, cutting women into pieces — nice tits, look at that ass, good dick sucking lips on that one!

Men say over and over that it's not all men. And yet seemingly every woman has a story of sexism. What are the mechanics of this social blindness? One is simple displacement. Privileged men project their sexism downward and outward to the faraway "Other" who is always more brutal and more savage. In comparison to them, we look like extras from *The Bachelor*. How can we be sexist? We let you drive and vote!

And then of course there's denial. We minimize the pain our male privilege causes women. Men are trained in, celebrate and have made industries out of violence. Often, pain is visible only if it's physical. Yet bodily harm is one pole on the spectrum of violence and making it the only "real" form of sexism renders invisible the thousand small acts of disrespect and aggression that women endure each day. But again there's that question. How can we be sexist? We didn't leave any marks!

Finally, sexism as an ideological practice "naturalizes" itself with nature and religion. Our dominance is part of the evolutionary order, we hunt, we pursue, we spread our seed, we build and destroy; we lead. Women are weak and emotional. Biology is destiny. Or pick your holy book, the Torah, the Bible, the Koran, all written by men, describing a male god who demands that women obey men. Shocker! Of course it leaves women in the impossible position of "interpreting" religious texts that are hopelessly sexist to eke out a moderate form of devotion.

Sexist ideology and practice are reproduced in institutions. The military, the church, Hollywood, sports, Wall Street, wherever all-male spaces exist or where men dominate and women are tokens, sexism builds and spills over. It recreates us in its image. And it recreates itself in how we imagine ourselves.

## NO HOMO!

Boys, ever feel scared you weren't a man? Ever stand, lonely, on the outside of a circle of men, who laughed with arms slung on each other's shoulders? When did you know



DIEGO TERROS

that a joke about women was the surest way in?

Remember the crack you made about pussy? How they laughed and brought you into the circle. Once inside, everyone took turns climbing this imagined "woman." You fucked her brains out, hosed her inner organs with your mighty jizz until they were glazed like porcelain, you came on her face in a total bukkake apocalypse until spent from laughter, you left the circle, knowing you were one of the guys.

If in Marxism the commodity is the basic element of capitalism, we can say that in Feminism, objectification is the core process of patriarchy. The turning of a human being into an object that is a tool for your purpose, who has no agency or feelings of her own, a woman interchangeable with other women or a thing you can destroy is the very discursive engine of patriarchy. And it happens because men are not really "men" but human beings performing a gender role, acting "masculine" by exchanging objectified images of women.

When men brag about fucking women, they're not exactly extolling an authentic connection with another human being. More likely, they're showing off the grade of conquest, her hair, her skin, her body shape. She becomes a trophy we pass around to others. She's an object, and possessing her proves our manhood to ourselves and to other men.

It creates the ugly dynamic of sexual entitlement, in which men believe they are owed women's bodies. And it cuts both ways. Privileged men feel entitled to sex simply because of their wealth, class or racial status. In his manifesto, "My Twisted Life," Elliot Rodgers — who was half-white and half-Asian — wrote, "How could an inferior, ugly black boy be able to get a white girl and not me? I am beautiful, and I am half white myself. I am descended from British aristocracy. *He* is descended from slaves. I deserve it more."

Underprivileged men, who feel too poor, too inexperienced, too ugly, too *not enough* are often dangerous. They overcompensate by strong-arming women, dominating or abusing them, attempting to control women they fear they can't keep otherwise. And then there is the subset of men who are insecure about their masculinity not because they're broke or ugly or awkward but because they're not really straight. They sublimate their bisexuality into sexist rituals of objectifying women and attacking gays and transgender people, who represent the very desires they repressed in themselves. These insecurities may be why on an Atlanta train in May, a group of men assaulted two transgender women. They taunted and violently attacked the pair, stripping one of the women naked while bystanders filmed the scene

*Continued on page 16*





GABRIELLA SZPUNT

## Explained

Men Explain Things to Me

BY REBECCA SOLNIT

HAYMARKET BOOKS/DISPATCH BOOKS, 2014

The seven essays in Rebecca Solnit's latest collection, *Men Explain Things to Me*, range from the righteously indignant title piece to commentaries that address the persistent plague of male violence, the backlash against marriage equality and the bubbling up of feminist activism among a new generation of youth. There's also serious scholarship here, including an analysis of Virginia Woolf's embrace of ambiguity and doubt, alongside work meant to inspire social change. It's a potent and engaging brew, and while some of the essays seem somewhat dated — six of the pieces were published in *TomDispatch*, *The Financial Times*, and *Zyzzva Magazine* between 2008 and early 2014 — Solnit's pull-no-punches observations nonetheless make this a valuable contribution to feminist theory.

Indeed, the many pontificators who have declared feminism passé need simply read the memoir fragment that became the title essay, "Men Explain Things to Me," to be reminded of their folly. In the piece, Solnit recounts a personal experience: The scene is a genteel dinner party and Solnit, with her friend Sally, is telling the male host about the recent release of her book, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West*.

"He cut me off after I mentioned Muybridge," Solnit begins. "'Have you heard about the very important Muybridge book that came out this year?'" The gent asked.

"Mr. Very Important," she continues, "was going on smugly about this book I should have known when Sally interrupted him to say, 'That's her book.' Or tried to interrupt him anyway. But he just continued on his way. She had to say, 'That's her book' three or four times before he finally took it in... And then, he went ashen."

Yes, it's funny in a "gotcha" sort of way, but it is also an experience that will resonate with many women. It surely did with me, as I remembered the guy who offered to "correct" an article I was working on and the man who suggested I read a lot if I wanted to write well.

While it helps to have a sense of humor about some of this, other topics, like the ubiquity of rape, sexual assault and domestic violence, are deadly serious. Solnit's "The Longest War" addresses these crimes — the

kinds of assaults that include the recent murder of teenager Maren Sanchez by a male peer in Connecticut and the killings carried out by Elliot Rodger in Isla Vista, California — and underscores the fact that they are far more likely to be perpetrated by men against women than the reverse. "The lives of half of humanity are still dogged by, drained by, and sometimes ended by this pervasive variety of violence," she writes. "Think of how much more time and energy we would have to focus on other things if we weren't so busy surviving."

Or, imagine, for that matter, not having to fight for marriage equality — not only in the traditional sense of the term, which denotes same-sex marriage, but in terms of equality between heterosexual partners. In "In Praise of the Threat," Solnit champions the parity she believes is inherent in LGBTQ relationships. While I would argue that the existence of racial and class hierarchies are as common in same-gender relationships as they are in straight ones, her contention that queer couplings represent an alternative to the rigid gender binary — one that opens up space for reimagining heterosexual relationships as well — is both refreshing and hopeful.

## SOLNIT CELEBRATES FEMINIST GAINS AND ARGUES THAT THE GENIE CANNOT BE STUFFED BACK INTO THE BOTTLE.

Likewise, her closing essay, "Pandora's Box and the Volunteer Police Force," notes how far we've come in the past 50 years. Domestic violence is considered a crime; women are visible players in political, social and economic life; bearing children out of wed-

lock is no longer deemed shameful or even wrong; and the term "rape culture" has been coined to call attention to society's assumptions about predatory male behavior.

And our lexicon has recently been expanded. As Solnit wrote on *TomDispatch* on June 1, the term "sexual entitlement" has come to the fore since the Isla Vista murders. This attitude, she explains, rests on the assumption that a man has the right to have sex with a woman regardless of what she wants. "In other words," Solnit wrote, "his rights trump hers, or she has none."

Although this is maddening, Solnit nonetheless celebrates the feminist gains that have been made to date and argues that, no matter the backlash, the genie cannot be stuffed back into the bottle. Although I'm not entirely convinced — just look at the Taliban or Nazi rise to power and the immediate suppression they orchestrated — if her optimism catalyzes a movement to ensure that these gains are maintained and built on, it will be high time to toast the vigilance of those — like Solnit — who have made it happen.

— ELEANOR J. BADER

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Precariousness has always been inherent in capitalist development but at this stage the capitalists' need to appropriate social wealth envelopes all life processes. Today, the working class is searching for new forms of self-activity while struggling with the changes capital is imposing on the labor process and our relation to nature. Now, more than ever, Marx and Engels' call in *The Communist Manifesto* that "The Working Class has nothing to lose but their chains... They have a world to win" resonates across the globe.

In the wake of the Brecht Forum's closure, members of the New York Marxist School's founding collective are organizing its annual "Summer Intensive", which explores the theoretical and practical traditions that originated in the works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. By uncovering the inner workings of the capitalist system, Marx and Engels laid the basis for theoretical explorations into all of human activity from art criticism to the environment. As the current crisis deepens and the state finds itself deploying more of the public wealth to save private capital, people are demanding answers that respect their intelligence and get to the root of the problem.

In an open-minded environment, lectures, readings and lively discussion, introduce participants to Marx's revolutionary critique of capitalism—not as a blueprint for change or a dogma that excludes other traditions, but as analytical tools that can help us to think more strategically and act more effectively.

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DAVID HOLLENBACH

# A World Without Ice?

BY JOHN TARLETON

Since the Industrial Revolution began two centuries ago, the amount of carbon dioxide in the air has grown by 43 percent while the annual average global temperature has increased by 0.8 degrees Celsius (1.5°F).

Amid this seemingly minor increase in temperatures, we have seen in the past decade increasingly powerful hurricanes and typhoons, scorching droughts and heat waves, more intense forest fires, unprecedented flooding and even some low-lying Pacific islands starting to disappear

beneath the waves.

Scientists warn that a good deal more warming (and a whole lot more trouble) is on the way. Even for people who acknowledge climate change is real, it's still an abstraction in a world filled with more immediate problems. After all, how drastically can the physical world we've always known be altered?

On May 12, we received an answer.

In separate studies teams of scientists from NASA and the University of Washington announced that the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) had "passed the point of no return" and would fully collapse with-

in 200 to 1,000 years. Glaciologists had long worried that the WAIS was a "weak link" because key parts of it are situated in a bowl that lies below sea level and is vulnerable to contact with warming ocean waters.

The initial disintegration of the WAIS is projected to increase sea levels by three feet by the end of this century and more than 10 feet when all is said and done. This will be the rough equivalent of a Hurricane Sandy-sized influx of water being the new normal on every coastline in the world.

The story made headlines for a day or

two. "For many, the research signaled that changes in the earth's climate have already reached a tipping point," the *New York Times* intoned, while *Mother Jones* called the news a "Holy Shit moment." Then, like a low-lying coastal island, the story was quickly submerged beneath a flood of media coverage about Jay Z and Solange's elevator smackdown.

Reading the reports from Antarctica, I felt a deep sense of loss. For New York (and other coastal cities), it's a future death sentence.

For a surreal glimpse into this future, I visited a website that superimposes ris-

## WHAT NEW YORKERS ARE SAYING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

INTERVIEWS BY ALEX ELLEFSON

PHOTOS BY ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA



**EMMA HYLTON, 70**  
RETIRED HOMECARE WORKER  
EAST NEW YORK, BROOKLYN

*When I think about climate change, I think about disaster. I think about hurricanes and floods. We used to have hurricanes when I lived in Jamaica. We had heavy floods and when we had rain, we had heavy rain. It would wash away houses.*

*A lot of people here, to them Sandy was a disaster. But coming from the island, when I was a child, we were without water or electricity for weeks or months and we just lived with it. But here, it's different. When there's a hurricane, people are afraid.*



**HEDDA HUDSON, 72**  
RETIRED SOCIOLOGIST  
BERLIN, GERMANY

*I can understand what Marx talks about. I don't know exactly what will happen but I think climate change says a lot about what's wrong. Capitalism*



**RAYA NITRAI, 36**  
HARE KRISHNA MONK  
1999 DODGE CARAVAN

*We need to focus on the internals to take care of the planet: people's consciousness and mentalities and what's in their heads. That automatically bleeds over into the external.*

*People need to be reminded of the purpose of life. If you're trying to*

*tell someone, let's not use so much oil or it's better to use solar power, they're like, "I'm only here for a few years and it's not going to bother me so much, so who cares?" And that's the general mentality. That's why we have these problems.*



**ALETHEIA HIGGINS, 28**  
PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
TEACHER  
CROWN HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN

*I don't see actions being taken to correct the problems that are happening. The ice caps are melting and*

*Fox News finally, recently discovered this, so it must be real at this point. Things are being done to reduce our carbon footprints but it's not being done on the scale that needs to happen.*

*People feel as if they don't really have any power. I care, I try to educate my students. But besides that, when it comes to taking action, people feel as if there's very little that can be done.*



**AKILAH STEWART, 27**  
SUSTAINABLE FASHION  
& FOOD ACTIVIST  
STATEN ISLAND

*If we hold the value of buy, buy, buy, then we're going to get the output of waste. People are not going to think about saving the earth. We talk a lot about racism and sexism but we don't talk about the first exploitation,*

*which is of the earth.*

*We're all islands here. Think about if that water rises any more: there's going to be no more of this wonderful place. I struggle every day to reduce my footprint, I focus on water conservation. Abroad, I would take a bucket and whatever was in that bucket, I would bathe with. I'm trying to incorporate this habit here in New York, which is very challenging. It's hard to give up my comfort but that's what it's about. Everybody giving up a little bit of comfort so that we can improve things for everyone and also improve the comfort of the earth.*



ing ocean waters onto street images from Google Earth. The quiet side street I live on in Alphabet City remained undisturbed, except for a two-story high river of water making soft lapping noises on my computer screen — I almost expected some of the neighborhood yuppies to zip by in kayaks heading to the nearest wine bar.

♦ ♦ ♦

Can this really be happening? Global warming brings to mind a bad 1950s science fiction movie starring an invisible, odorless gas, carbon dioxide, that gradually accumulates and threatens to change life on the planet as we know it. And now — cue the ominous musical score — we have a mysterious continent lying frozen at the bottom of the world that is beginning to shed its icy cover.

Unlike the usual Hollywood blockbuster, this apocalypse will not be a single, spectacular moment but a slow inundation, a fraying of an interconnected global civilization upon which many of the world’s seven billion people depend.

The news about climate change is often bad, but it has also spurred scientists to decipher the history of our planet and its climate systems. For the past quarter century, they have fanned out across the earth to study rocks, sediments, ice sheets, tree rings, corals, shells and microfossils and contemplated the clues left by the past. Their remarkable detective work has given us a much more nuanced understanding of how the Earth’s climate system has functioned (and malfunctioned) in the past and should inspire how we act while we still have time to make a difference.

♦ ♦ ♦

In a nutshell, the Earth has fluctuated between climate regimes both much hot-

ter and much colder than the current status quo. On at least one occasion in the Earth’s ancient past runaway global cooling left the planet fully covered in ice (“Snowball Earth”). In the past two million years, glaciers have repeatedly spread down from the North Pole and covered much of Europe, North America and Asia in what is known as the Ice Ages.

However, for many of the past 300 million years, the Earth has been a good deal warmer than it currently is, and it has often been ice-free. Picture a torrid world suited to the likes of Brontosaurus and T-Rex with alligators swimming in the Arctic Circle and you get the idea. The switchover from a hothouse climate to the cooler one we’re familiar with began 34 million years ago at the transition from the Eocene to the Oligocene Epoch. This transition roughly coincides with when ice sheets began to form on Antarctica.

Since the last Ice Age ended 12,000 years ago, humans have enjoyed a stable climate with moderate temperatures. This allowed our hunter-gatherer ancestors to transition from hunting big game to cultivating plants. The rise of agriculture facilitated the emergence of urban centers and complex civilizations with all their blessings and curses.

♦ ♦ ♦

The fossil fuel-burning binge of the past two hundred years has put humanity’s long springtime at risk. In recent years, scientists have discovered that runaway global warming has occurred many times in the past. When it does, the Earth’s climate system barrels through a series of tipping points like a train running downhill without brakes.

We may already be in the early stages of such a scenario. As just one example, hotter temperatures have made forests dryer and more likely to catch fire. Instead

of pulling CO2 out of the air, all those burning trees put carbon back into the atmosphere. In 2012, heavy forest fires in North America deposited large amounts of soot on the Greenland Ice Sheet. This, in turn, meant now-darkened ice absorbed heat instead of reflecting it back into space. A record melt ensued that summer in Greenland.

It remains to be seen how many tipping points we may pass through. CO2 levels are currently at 400 parts per million, the highest in three million years. If current trends continue unabated, CO2 levels will rise to 600 ppm by the end of this century. Should we soar beyond 1,000 parts per million, a fully ice free world with sea levels 200 feet higher than at present becomes inevitable, says Peter Ward, a University of Washington paleontologist and author of several books on the history of mass extinctions.

Runaway global warming has been the culprit behind four of history’s five mass extinctions, Ward says (the fifth occurred 65 million years ago when a giant meteor strike wiped out the dinosaurs). The doomsday scenario he describes runs like this: Sudden increases in carbon dioxide and methane (another powerful greenhouse gas) drive up temperatures by as much as 10 degrees Celsius (18°F). This disrupts deep ocean currents that circulate water between warmer and colder latitudes while a decrease in equator-to-pole temperature differences brings ocean winds and surface currents to a standstill. The oceans stagnate and become oxygen-starved ponds. They then give rise to green bacteria that release vast quantities of hydrogen sulfide — a colorless gas that smells like rotten eggs — into the atmosphere, with grim results.

“It’s like a World War I shelling by gas,” Ward told *The Independent*.

*Continued on next page*



**MELISSA KEELING, 26  
MUSICIAN  
WASHINGTON HEIGHTS,  
MANHATTAN**

*My issue with the issue of climate change is that it seems so big and it seems like there’s not really much one person can do to make a difference. Climate change should be more important than it is now. It’s definitely gained a lot of steam, I think, in the last decade. For me, I’m definitely*

*realizing it more now that I’m older. I mean, there’s obviously worse problems out there. Wars. Democracy. AIDS. But it’s still pretty bad and I’m really worried about it.*



**BENJAMIN VEILLEUX, 24,  
BILLING ANALYST  
HARLEM, MANHATTAN**

*I let other people worry about climate change, I guess.*

*The earth only has a limited amount of resources. I don’t know if it’s a duty but throughout our history we’ve not been concerned about the environment until now.*



**ELLIE KANG, 24  
STUDENT  
UPPER WEST SIDE, MANHATTAN**

*When I go to Starbucks, I bring my own mug or tumbler and when I shop at the supermarket, I always bring my own bag. In Korea, we have to pay a fee when we use plastic bags or paper bags because it affects the environment. Here in New York City, it’s free, so there’s abuse and so much waste.*



**MIKE PAULEMON, 31  
SERVICE TECHNICIAN  
CANARSIE, BROOKLYN**

*I would be naïve to say that carbon dioxide doesn’t play a part in climate change but that’s the way the world is — a lot of people don’t understand that their car is messing up the environment. They’re just thinking about how they need to get somewhere now. Everybody is in a rush all the time.*

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*I am an artist.*

*I design for the Indy.*

*I can design for you.*

## Ice

*Continued from previous page*

The worst of these episodes — the Permian-Triassic Extinction — occurred 252 million years ago and saw 96 percent of all species on Earth killed off.



On May 29 French energy giant Total SA announced that it was indefinitely suspending an \$11 billion project to develop the Joslyn tar sands mine in Canada's northern province of Alberta. In its announcement the company cited escalating costs and limited access to pipelines. For climate justice and indigenous activists in the United States and Canada who have worked in recent years to thwart tar sands pipelines coming out of Alberta, it was a small but significant victory.

In May and early June, three towns in Massachusetts and the Anglican Church of New Zealand moved to divest in fossil fuel stocks, the Obama administration announced plans to reduce emissions from coal-fired power plants by 30 percent by 2030 and Barclays decided to downgrade the bond rating of all U.S. electric utilities because of the growing threat utilities face from the solar industry.

Will these actions by themselves stop the fossil fuel industry in its tracks? Hardly. Nor can we entirely turn back the onset of climate change. However, these small victories remind us that *we have the ability to do something* while it still matters.

If enough of us move from unease to active engagement, we may yet be able to rein in the fossil fuel companies and speed up the launch of a low-carbon, green economy. The technologies exist to make this happen and the millions of new jobs such a transition would create are sorely needed.

Here in New York we have a unique opportunity to make our voices heard in advance of a September 23 climate conference for world leaders that will be hosted at the United Nations. A broad coalition of environmental, labor, student and community groups is organizing what they hope will be a massive demonstration to be held September 20 or 21 (see sidebar).

"A loud movement — one that gives our 'leaders' permission to actually lead, and then scares them into doing so — is the only hope," author and activist Bill McKibben wrote in an open invitation to join the protest published in *Rolling Stone*.

It's often difficult for people to see how they can do anything about climate change. Hopefully a sea of people will fill the streets of Manhattan on September 20 or 21. And while much of our city is destined to someday disappear beneath the waves, it actually matters as much for us as our descendants whether the West Antarctic Ice Sheet finishes dropping into the ocean in two centuries or 10. It will be the measure of whether in the early 21st century we really took responsibility for addressing climate change and the system that perpetuates it and began to save ourselves, or if we let business as usual run its course.

## PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH

Efforts to reach a new global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have been stalled for years. With world leaders coming to the United Nations for a September 23 climate conference, climate change activists are mobilizing for a massive protest they hope will inject a new sense of urgency into the deliberations.

The People's Climate March will be held in Manhattan on either Saturday, September 20 or Sunday, September 21, depending on the outcome of negotiations with the NYPD, said Leslie Cagan, a march coordinator.

"The basic demand of this effort is that governments of the world need to take action," Cagan said. "The time for talk-talk is over."

As of early June, more than 100 environmental, student, labor, community, Occupy and faith-based groups have signed on as co-sponsors. Hundreds more are expected to come on board. Organizers are putting out calls for people from across the United States to come to New York, and they will do an East Coast speaking tour closer to the event to rally interest. Cagan said she expects there will be a wide array of spin-off protests and educational and cultural events that will take place during the weeks before and after the main demonstration.

"The potential for something big is there," said Cagan, who has previously organized demonstrations hundreds of thousands of people strong against the U.S.-Soviet arms race, the invasion of Iraq and at the 2004 Republican National Convention. "We'd like this to stand out on that short list of the largest demonstrations in the country's history."

*For more, see [peoplesclimatemarch.org](http://peoplesclimatemarch.org).*

— JOHN TARLETON

## Men

*continued from page 12*

but did not intervene.

### A GAME OF STATUS

The daily control of women is how patriarchy is maintained. On their bruises we map our property. On their silence, we forge our voice. At the core is our need to be a "man" for other men, and a woman is a checker piece we use to play a game of status with other men. And we are desperate to know we're men because at our core, we're never that sure.

There is also a great desire to be free of it. We feel it individually when we are with women we love — romantic partners, yes, but also our family, our friends, our colleagues. Even the most sexist men will defend women they love, because in their compartmentalized minds a special room exists for real relationships that tether them to reality. And we feel it in social movements when, united for a common cause, we want

each other's greatness to shine. In the Slut March of 2011, in the gay weddings of our friends and family, we experience glimpses of that post-sexist world. When authentic human connection lets the man-mask come off, our whole inner being becomes real again.

Now if we can take what we know from our personal and public lives and make feminism a goal among men, our vision of the world will change. When the photo of the Indian girls, raped, strangled and hung from a tree is in the news, we will see their male killers in the same way we now think of whites, gathered around the body of a lynched Black man, as people sick with a terrible ideology that transforms their fear into cruelty.

The first step is incredibly simple — LISTEN! Ask the women in your life what their experience of sexism is and as they talk, just shut up. Do you clench up? Do you feel a wall between your mind and her words? Instead of shutting down, use your defense mechanisms as a map to what scares

you about their pain and confront it.

Sadly, some men won't listen, and they must be challenged and healed when possible, defeated when not. But the desire to be free of sexism does exist. Leaving the Nostrand subway station the other night, I passed through the turnstile as a man was yelling at a young woman, "Come here sweet thing. Get your ass over here. Got this for you."

I saw her ducking her head as if dodging rocks, and then a guy in overalls yelled, "Nigga what's wrong with you! Can't see she want to be left alone." A circle of us eyed the asshole sexist. "I hate motherfuckers like you," the man in overalls shouted. "You ain't a man, motherfucker, do that shit to me, come on bitch, say that to me." The asshole sexist mumbled some Caribbean gibberish and left as we followed him out with our eyes. And then we looked at each other and I swear we all liked what we saw.

I looked at the young woman, quickly jogging up the steps. Did she?



# Images of Latin America

*“Urbes Mutantes”*  
INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
THROUGH SEPTEMBER 7

*“Bearing Witness: Art and  
Resistance in Cold War Latin  
America”*  
SHIVA GALLERY, JOHN JAY  
COLLEGE  
THROUGH SEPTEMBER 12

A series of small, untitled, black-and-white photographs taken around 1980 shows a modern city: there are tall buildings, wide concrete sidewalks and very few people. The weather is grey and foggy; the city looks like a sad place. This feeling — of urban anomie, or a sort of post-industrial loneliness — will be familiar enough to pretty much anyone who’s spent a lot of time in a big, modern city, walked around its business district at night or waited too long for the bus home. But here’s the thing: the photos, by Mauricio Valenzuela, are specifically of Santiago, Chile’s capital. Shot during the regime of Augusto Pinochet, the photos aren’t just about modernity and alienation, but also the muffled conditions of life under a military dictatorship.

Valenzuela’s photos are part of “Urbes Mutantes,” currently on display at the International Center of Photography. Subtitled “Latin American Photography 1944-2013,” the show looks at Latin American cities in times of social, economic and political upheaval (or in other words, pretty much the entire second half of the 20th century). Many of the works on view involve conflict between culture and modernity, showing tradition and daily life under the ever-advancing pressures of capitalism. For example, Susanna Torres’s *Neo-Inca Museum* (1999-2013) presents straightforward, objective photos of supermarket products with “Inca”-style branding: an indigenous Peruvian culture turned consumerist cartoon (Inca Kola, anyone?). Miguel Rio Branco’s harsh photo diptych *Man Dog* (1979) shows the exhausted body of a beggar alongside the damaged body of a dog, each photographed on the streets of Maciel, Brazil. The symbolism — the idea that in the modern world, the urban poor are often treated as something less than human — is blunt, but it works. Gertjan Bartelsman’s 1994 *Pogo* (*Moshing*) shows a sweaty mosh pit at a Colombian punk show, a more recent sort of cultural tradition that is also threatened by grim econom-



Marcelo Montecino, *Military School (Escuela Militar)*, Santiago, 1983. Collection Leticia and Stanislas Poniatowski. ©The Artist

ic realities. Of the young men in the photo, Bartelsman says that many of them are probably now dead because of the drug trade, a tragedy looming outside the frame.

For her haunting *Area* photos (1999), Luz María Bedoya shot the façades of Lima apartment buildings at night. Lit windows show isolated domestic scenes against a field of closed drapes and darkened rooms. In his playful yet melancholy photos, Victor Robledo turned construction materials scavenged on the streets of Bogotá into indoor abstractions, or meditations on the qualities of light and space in urban environments. Viewers may be surprised at how much of the exhibit has this tone: personal, ruminative and a bit lonely. Even a section called “The People and Protest” feels unexpectedly tragic, as in Marcelo Montecino’s 1983 *Military School (Escuela Militar)*. Taken in Santiago, it shows a sea of young initiates into Chile’s powerful military, extending beyond the frame with absolutely no end in sight.

Those looking for a more trenchant document of protest and defiance might want to check out “Bearing Witness: Art and Resistance in Cold War Latin America,” on view at the Shiva Gallery at John Jay College. The show is actually a lot smaller and more concise than that name implies — it focuses specifically on Chile and Brazil, with four memorable bodies of work made in response to the repression and abuse that were endemic to those countries’ military dictatorships. The 1980s photojournalism of Juan Carlos Cáceres captures some of the emotional and (literally) inflammatory energy of anti-Pinochet protests and their attendant police violence, while Iván Navarro’s 2008 video installation *The Missing Monument for Washington D.C.* posits the torture and execution of leg-

endary Chilean folk singer Víctor Jara as part of a lineage of cruelty that continues in the post-9/11 United States.

And then, there’s *Sala Oscura de Tortura (The Dark Room of Torture)*. Produced in 1972 by the collective La Denúncia, the work is a room-sized installation of paintings created in response to the clandestine torture practices of the Brazilian military. With their realistic renderings and spare, reduced compositions, each painting shows a life-sized body in crisis, a naked prisoner in the throes of state-sanctioned agony. It’s the kind of work that could end up feeling exploitative or nihilistic, but it was made with too much care and too much purpose for that, and with its combined use of scale, light and art-historical classicism, it makes the realities of torture feel terrifyingly present. Guanaes Netto, one of the artists in the collective, gave this recent statement: “Almost half a century after its creation, this work serves as a permanent form of denunciation.” It almost goes without saying that in 2014, denunciations of the practice of torture are no less relevant or necessary.

The works in “Urbes Mutantes” mostly lack that sort of ideological directness, but both exhibitions scale big cultural and political changes down to an immediately relatable, human level. In the face of enormous and potentially dehumanizing modern systems, it would serve us well to remember that cities are defined by their people — or in other words, by us. In the banks and skyscrapers, at the movie theaters and the punk rock shows, on the sidewalks and in the prison cells, at the parades and the protest rallies: we are the city, even when we’re, strangely, nowhere to be seen.

— MIKE NEWTON

“Brazil is a special country and Dave Zirin honors its people and history while mercilessly going after those who would undermine its people. This book is a remarkable mix of investigative sports journalism and insightful social history.”

—Glenn Greenwald, author, *No Place to Hide*

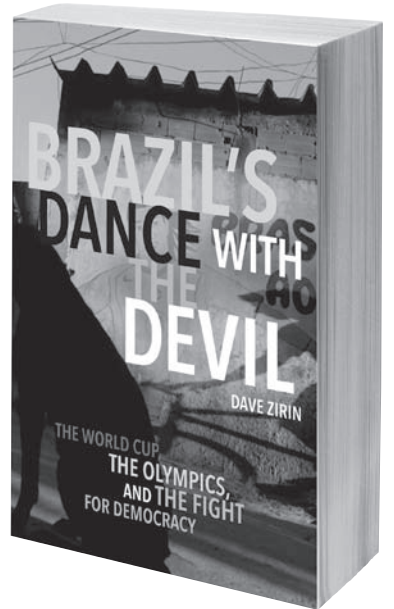
“It hits you like an uppercut that rattles your brain and sets it straight. I cannot recommend this book highly enough.”

—John Carlos, 1968 Olympic medalist

“In *Brazil’s Dance with the Devil*, Zirin’s at his best, on familiar and fertile ground. Like so much of his work, it’s incisive, heartbreaking, important and even funny.”

—Jeremy Schaap, ESPN, author, *Cinderella Man*

As the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games approach, ordinary Brazilians are holding the country’s biggest protests in decades. Sports journalist Dave Zirin traveled to Brazil to find out why. From the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to the fabled Maracanã Stadium, Zirin examines how athletic mega-events turn into neoliberal Trojan horses.



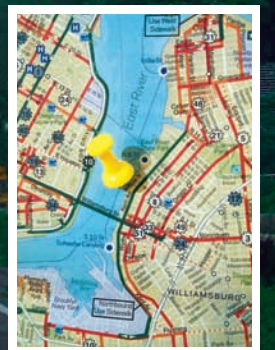
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# Karikatura's World of Sound

BY DAVID MEADOW

World dance-fusion band Karikatura packed the East Village's Bowery Electric to capacity on Sunday, June 1, making the floors throb and the audience whirl. A listener might be hard-pressed to categorize this act, but this is how they self-identify: "An organic synthesis of all the music heard blasting out of car windows and shops onto the streets of NYC, Karikatura lives where cumbia meets hip-hop, reggae meets klezmer and indie-rock meets afrobeat." The event was an album-release party for their LP *Eyes Wide*, which includes a number of social themes like gentrification, immigration, media propaganda and the atomization of society (the title track plays on the idea of false consciousness, or at least competing consciousnesses).

The band pulls off these ambitious multi-genre designations by drawing on a deep vocabulary, both of different idioms in general and individual rhythms and riffs in partic-

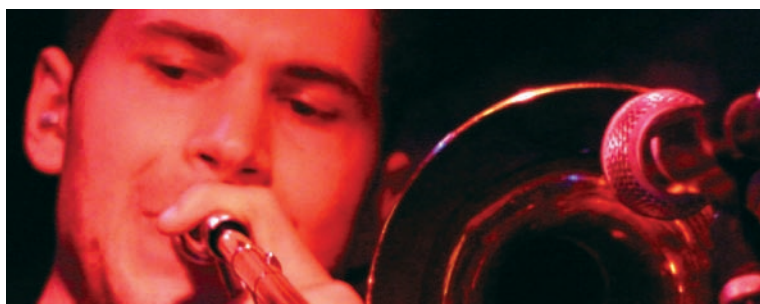
by originals selected for maximum danceability. It was eighth-note funk beats and percussive riffs from all instruments, including melody ones. However, on June 1, they shared the bill with a very good son/salsa group, Los Hacheros, so, appropriately for the occasion, they focused much more on Latin or Latin-tinged



Ryan Acquatto

material, with *guaguanco* patterns on the ride cymbal and *claves* on the cowbell. Drummer Morgan Greenstreet, perhaps the most deft and subtle deployer of these diverse cues, even took up the conga at one point and launched his kit into a true 6/8 polyrhythm at another.

a memorable solo turn, he achieved a fast, fugal run by tapping the fretboard with his fingers. I don't know about the audience, but the first bass player this reminded me of was the late, great Cliff Burton of Metallica shredding it out circa 1986. It was almost cheeky in its unexpectedness (though Karikatura founder and



Karl Lyden

guitarist Dima Kay appears to have started in heavy metal, for whatever that's worth). In any case, the audience went right along with it and cheered lustily.

Vocalist Ryan Acquatto, with his forceful yet tender tenor, often seems to plead earnestly with his

each other going — almost physically whip the audience into motion.

Another element that works well here is the combination of tenor sax (Joe Wilson, switching occasionally to alto) and trombone (usually Till Keunkler, with Karl Lyden subbing for him at this performance and Ric Becker playing on the album).

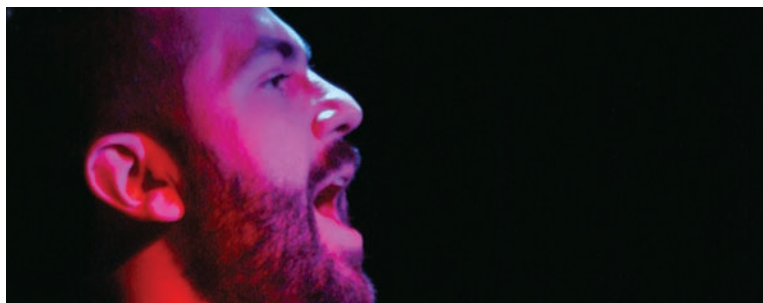
Dima Kay, who conceived the group while making his way across India in 2009. Kay tied things together well that night with his guitar, mostly subliminal as he chorded and matched the bass or horns, and leaped out every now and then with a slinky solo or a prominent book-ending riff drenched in delay-pedal



Joe Wilson

effects.

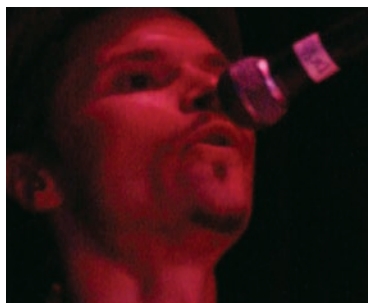
If you want to see Karikatura for yourselves, they are playing at Mehanata, in the Lower East Side, on Saturday, June 28. You *will* smile, you *will* shake your butt, you *will* think about why you love this city so much — and you might even be



Dima Kay

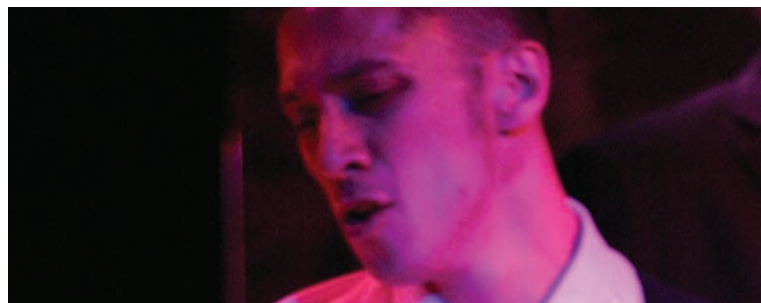
ular. It was instructive to compare this performance with their performance at a private wedding that I attended, by sheer coincidence, back in May. There they offered some very respectable renditions of traditional Jewish *freylakhs*, followed mostly

Powerhouse bass player Eric Legaspi came up with some great lines in this show. By sheer dint of playing bass, he's bound to get more appreciation from the musicians than the rest of the audience, but let no one say he doesn't fight for attention. In



Morgan Greenstreet

spectators to join the band in its blissful outpouring of energy, and the Bowery Electric show exemplified this. His undulating dance moves, coupled with those of the hyper-energetic Legaspi — and these two really shake it when they get



Eric Legaspi

between their long, demanding charts of harmonized riffs and their assured solos, the two horns are indispensable to the group's musical chemistry.

Karikatura is originally the brainchild of the above-mentioned

coaxed into thinking about how it can be made into a better city for everybody.

For more, see [karikaturanyc.com](http://karikaturanyc.com).

## JUNE–JULY THEATER LISTINGS

### THE OTHER MOZART

WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY SYLVIA MILO  
DIRECTED BY ISAAC BYRNE

Nannerl Mozart was a child musical prodigy who toured Europe with her brother Amadeus to equal critical acclaim; though a keyboard virtuoso and composer, she faded from history, eclipsed by her brother, leaving nothing behind. *The Other Mozart* uses Nannerl's own letters, as well as those of her family, to investigate how this once celebrated artist faded from the world's stage.

June 22–July 12  
Tue–Sun, 8:30pm; Sat & Sun, 4pm  
June 23, 8:30pm  
HERE ARTS CENTER  
145 6th Ave

[theothermozart.com](http://theothermozart.com)

### CARNIVAL KIDS

WRITTEN BY LUCAS KAVNER  
DIRECTED BY STEPHEN BRACKETT  
PRESENTED BY LESSER AMERICA

When an aimless former rock star loses his job and finds himself broke with nowhere to go, he's forced to move in with his adopted son and his roommate in their cramped New York City apartment. As the two of them try to forge new lives together, a get-rich-quick scheme further complicates their lives and loves.

June 5–28  
Thu–Sat, 8pm  
June 8, 9, 18 and 15, 8pm  
TBG THEATRE  
312 W 36th St  
Tickets: \$18/\$15 students  
[lesseramerica.com](http://lesseramerica.com)

### A MAP TO SOMEWHERE ELSE

WRITTEN BY REINA HARDY  
DIRECTED BY ANAIS KOIVISTO

PRESENTED BY

### EVERYDAY INFERNO THEATRE COMPANY

What happens to the imagined worlds we create as children, the tender, heroic, silly, elaborate fantasies that shape the souls of so many ordinary people, then are abandoned as we grow? What if, all this time, they were there waiting, hoping we'd come back? This comic drama full of fantasy, music and magic asks what happens when that long-closed door is reopened.

June 19–21, 23–28, 8pm; June 22, 5pm  
133RD STREET ARTS CENTER LAB  
308 W 133rd St  
Tickets: \$16  
[everydayinferno.com](http://everydayinferno.com)

### THE GYRE: TWO PLAYS IN REPERTORY

THE QUALIFICATION OF DOUGLAS EVANS  
WRITTEN BY DEREK AHONEN  
DIRECTED BY DOUGLAS EVANS

### ENTER AT FOREST LAWN

WRITTEN BY MARK ROBERTS  
DIRECTED BY JAY STULL  
PRESENTED BY THE AMORALISTS

A two-play repertory exploring man's vicious cycles: *The Qualification of Douglas Evans*, recounting a playwright's pursuit of acceptance in a warped world of women, family, and art, from wide-eyed teenager to the darker trappings of success; and *Enter at Forest Lawn*, the darkly comic story of a debauched sitcom star and the lengths to which his megalomaniacal producer will go to keep the laughter coming and the money train on the tacks.

June 26–August 9  
See website for schedule  
WALKERSPACE  
46 Walker St  
Tickets: \$40, \$20 students  
[theamoralists.com](http://theamoralists.com)

— Listings provided by ROBERT GONYO and the GO SEE A SHOW! podcast, [goseeshowpodcast.com](http://goseeshowpodcast.com)



## Brazil's World Cup Is No Carnival

*Brazil's Dance with the Devil: The World Cup, the Olympics, and the Fight for Democracy*

By Dave Zirin

HAYMARKET BOOKS 2014



PAULO ITO/FLICKR

**HARD TO SWALLOW:** A mural on the doors of a schoolhouse in São Paulo, Brazil.

Sports reporting has morphed into shoutfests with your morning radio zoo crew hosts Buzzard and Numbnut opining that the coach should get fired and that first-time-long-time caller Joey in Queens doesn't know what he's talking about. ESPN's SportsCenter drones on endlessly in bars with too many TVs and the local paper quotes some athlete cliché repeated a million times before. Nonetheless, when you turn down the volume, sports journalism can elevate athletics as a mirror of society and tell us about the world.

People in the United States are familiar with this story: your hometown pro-sports team might leave if they do not get a package of tax benefits and giveaways to build a new stadium. Your favorite team paints PR gloss about all the jobs created, convention crowds and housing for what amounts to a colossal shell surrounded by a sea of parking lots that sits empty most of the year. Taxpayers foot the bill and the team stays put to antagonize you with their mediocre play until you call in to the radio show demanding the coach gets fired.

But what happens when an entire country goes on a stadium-building binge?

In *Brazil's Dance with the Devil*, American sportswriter Dave Zirin visits Brazil, host of this year's soccer World Cup and the 2016 summer Olympics, and writes of mass discontent. The key villains are FIFA, the notoriously corrupt world soccer federation, and the International Olympic Committee aided by Brazil's ruling Workers'

Party. The Brazilian government is spending tens of billions of dollars in public funds and gives carte blanche for mega-project developers to raze entire communities. This is money not spent on education, health care and housing. Zirin gets his boots on the ground and talks to the people standing in the way of Brazil's stadium push.

The author of four previous books on the intersection of sports and social conflict, Zirin is an ardent sports fan. But, he doesn't buy for a moment that sports is apolitical or should be divorced from the larger society from which it springs. In *Dance with the Devil*, he interviews residents of Rio de Janeiro favela Vila Autodromo, which sits on prime real estate land next to the 2016 Olympic Park. Threatened with having their community leveled, residents formed a community association to resist the wrecking ball and have thus far successfully fought the mayor, though many favela residents took buyouts or moved into a new housing complex. Their resistance combined lawsuits, activism and a knack for catching the eye of the media.

"Even with TV cameras and media, it doesn't mean that city officials wouldn't be violent with us," Vila Autodromo resident Jane Nascimento told Zirin. "The evicted communities are often evicted with tear gas while TV cameras are rolling."

Zirin posits that to understand futebol ("foo-chee-bowl") is to understand Brazil. He provides a

concise history of a country that has known slavery (which was not abolished until 1888) and military dictatorship as well a record five World Cup championships. However, *Dance with the Devil* is not a textbook. It's ultimately a tale of the choices that sports forces both athletes and the larger society to make.

Zirin's heroes are athletes like Muhammad Ali, Billie Jean King and Olympians Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who combined great athletic achievement with the courage to use their rare and exalted position in society to speak out against injustice. His villains are jocks like Michael Jordan who think only of turning their fame into million-dollar endorsement deals. In this book Zirin contrasts Brazilian soccer stars Garrincha and Pelé (the first athlete to copyright his name) as symbolic of the tension between "the people" and neoliberalism's emphasis on wealth and status.

"Becoming an international icon was very profitable for Pelé," Zirin notes, "but it also had the effect of distancing him from Brazil's masses. If he belonged to international commercialism, then he could never really belong to them." In 2009 Pelé took center stage with then-Brazilian President Lula da Silva to announce that Brazil had won the right to host the 2016 Olympic Games. He has also served as a leading ambassador for this year's World Cup.

In 2013 protests swept Brazil and raged against out-of-control World Cup and Olympic spending but also echoed grievances concerning government graft, racial and economic inequality and middle-class worries about the cost of living. *Dance with the Devil* does not cover these protests in detail, though the upheaval rattled Brazil's government. World Cup-related protests and strikes erupted again in May and could overshadow this year's games, which are slated to run from June 12 to July 13. To understand why, there's no better place to start than Zirin's book.

—BENNETT BAUMER

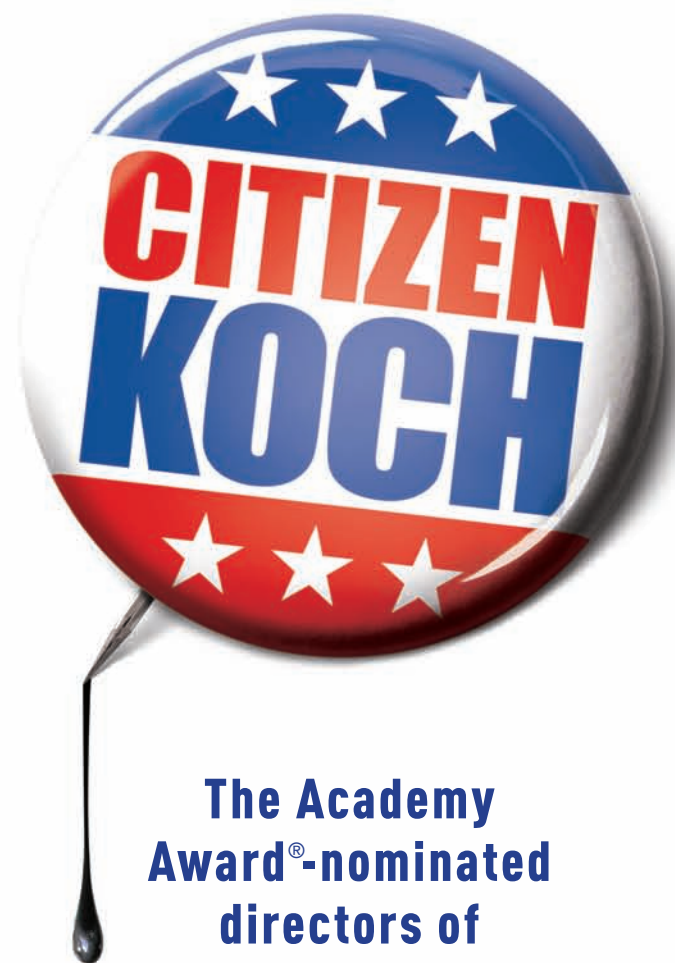


NINJA MEDIA/FLICKR

**GIVE 'EM THE BOOT:** Government spending on the World Cup has sparked protests in Brazil.

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—Michael Moore



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